THE
BALLAD
OF DOCTOR
RICHARDSON

**12 HOURS IN A MAN'S LIFE.
12 HOURS WHICH WILL
CHANGE HIS LIFE.**

By all accounts, he's a failure. An academic who lacks the respect of his students and peers, an obscure author who hasn't published a word in nearly a decade, a dreamer who lives alone except for a cat and a telescope; a man whose very shyness keeps him isolated and yearning.

But tonite he decides to do something different. Tonite he decides to find some sort of *solution.* Tonite he will change the course of his life, because tonite he choses the unknown.

And on the other side of the night and his choice, a woman awaits...

"A very powerful and moving story!"

-- Will Eisner

"*Doctor Richardson* is dead on. This is the way graphic novels *should* be."

-- Pat Boyette

THE BALLAD OF DOCTOR RICHARDSON

THE BALLAD PAGE 9
THE REFLECTIONS PAGE 100
THE POSTSCRIPT STRIP PAGE 107

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Edited by Robin Snyder

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"I DO"

More Praise for Pope And his work:

"Fine Stuff! Very European!"

— Tim Truman

"Paul is to be congratulated for his enthusiasm and integrity. His style is his stamp. It distinguishes him from the Niagara of xerox illustrators pouring into the field."

— Robert Kanigher

"Doctor Richardson is thoroughly unique, avant-garde, and original."

— Comics Previews

"Refreshing... Simple, direct drawing."

— Dave McKean

"Pope excels in storytelling. He's on the right track."

— Will Eisner

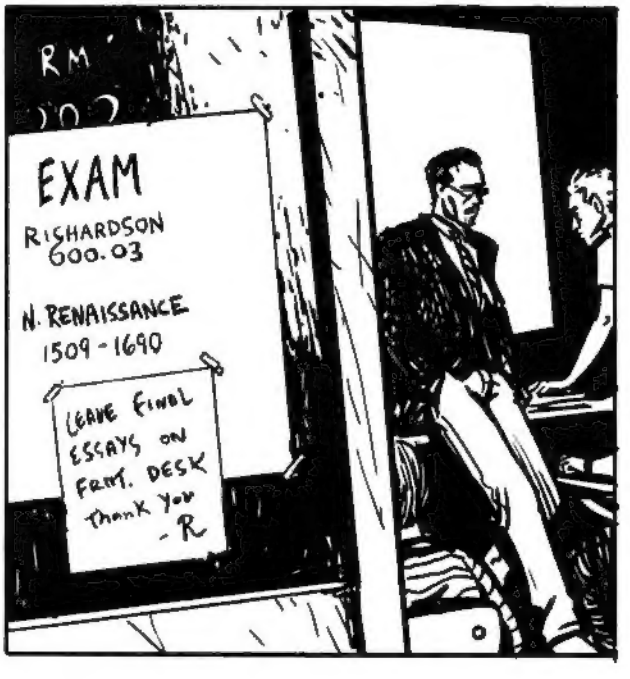
"Recommended... Certified cool."

— [illegible]

"This is a brilliant and sophisticated story. Ordinarily, [illegible] this type [illegible] from Europe and translated into English. Well, here's [illegible]"

— [illegible] Comics Magazine

For Alex Toth


RM
EXAM
RICHARDSON
600.03
N. RENAISSANCE
1509 - 1690
LEAVE FINAL
ESSAYS ON
FRNT. DESK
thank you
- R

ALRIGHT. IT'S A MINUTE AFTER. LET'S BEGIN
THE PROCEDURE IS THE STANDARD ONE.
TEN I.D'S, TWO UNKNOWNS.
ONE IN-CLASS ESSAY.
GIVE ME NAMES, DATES, THE TITLES OF THE PAINTINGS SHOWN, AND LOCATIONS, IF KNOWN.
YOU HAVE FIFTY MINUTES.

EYES ON YOUR OWN PAPER, UP FRONT.
AND THAT'S ABOUT IT. LET'S WRAP THIS UP.
I'LL COLLECT YOUR TEST BOOKLETS.
AND YOU'RE FREE.

DO I HAVE EVERYONE'S...?

HERE, DOCTOR

HM?

I THINK I'M THE LAST ONE. HERE.

THANK YOU.

OH, I MEANT TO TELL YOU...

WHAT?

I READ YOUR ESSAY DURING THE TEST.

VERY FINE.

OH, THANKS

WELL, BEST TO YOU.

YEAH, UH. I GOT MY NEXT TEST AT FIVE-THIRTY...

RIGHT. GOOD LUCK.

SAME TO YOU.

PARDON ME, DOCTOR.
...WHERE IS IT NOW?
WE'VE ALREADY MAILED IT BACK TO HIS HOME ADDRESS.
REJECTED AGAIN?
WELL, HIS RHETORIC IS LAUDIBLE, BUT HIS POLITICAL VIEWS...
AH, YES. OF COURSE. WE HAVE OUR REPUTATION TO CONSIDER.
CERTAINLY
IMAGINE WHAT OUR ACADEMIC PEERS WOULD SAY ABOUT US!
AND HAD YOU SEEN THE MANUSCRIPT HE SUBMITTED?
I UNDERSTAND HE REFUSED EDITORIAL CHANGES.

THAT'S CORRECT.
HASN'T HIS AREA OF CONCENTRATION BEEN THE NORTHERN RENAISSANCE?
CORRECT AGAIN.
IT SHIFTED FROM VENICE. APPARENTLY IT WAS THIS TEXT..
... WHICH PRECIPITATED THE CHANGE.
ANNE SAYS HE'S BEEN WORKING ON THE TEXT FOR YEARS, PRIVATELY.
MOST LIKELY.
WE'RE NOT THE FIRST PRESS TO TURN HIM AWAY, EITHER.
HE MUST HAVE A HILL OF REJECTION SLIPS...
SUFFICE IT TO SAY HE REPRESENTS NO ACADEMIC MAJORITY.

LET ME SEE.

HE HASN'T PUBLISHED, EVEN WITH LESS RESPECTED PRESSES... IN A DECADE?

NINE YEARS.

HOW DOES HE KEEP FROM A QUICK DEATH?

STUBBORNESS AND PERSISTENCE.

HE DOES SOME UNDERGRAD TEACHER, SOME ADMINISTRATION.

THE BOOK HE EDITED ON THE ITALIANS IS STILL IN USE, I HEAR.

BUT NO ESSAYS, NOTHING IN THE JOURNALS...

NO LECTURE INVITATIONS, NO PERFORMANCES, NOTHING.

DISGRACEFUL, REALLY.

INDEED.

HE MAKES IT HARD ON HIMSELF.

I UNDERSTAND

SEE YOU AT THE FOUCAULT SYMPOSIUM TUESDAY, ANNE?

MAYBE.

GOODBYE, ANNE.

ADIOS.

SEE YOU.

YOU MAY COME OUT NOW, DOCTOR.

HOW DID YOU KNOW I WAS THERE?

THE SCENT OF CHERRY TOBACCO IN A SMOKING PIPE.

YOU HEARD IT ALL.

YES.

JEFFERSON, YOU COULD BE PUBLISHED. YOU COULD BE FAMOUS, EVEN. IF ONLY YOU'D TAKE THE PROPER VIEW OF THINGS...

I CAN'T, ANNE.

WHY NOT?

BECAUSE I DON'T THINK THIS IS HUMANITY.

YOU MAY AS WELL ASK ME TO KILL MYSELF.

HAPPY CHANUKAH ANNE.

JEFFERSON?

YES?

...NOTHING. MERRY CHRISTMAS.

BAR

IMHOTEP

217

HELLO, JAMES.

AND HOW ARE YOU TODAY?

VIDEO ON.

FIGHTING INTENSIFIED BETWEEN TRIBAL FACTIONS AS...

SCAN.

FROM FLIPPO THE HIPPO! DRINK W

SCAN.

SCAN.

THE MARS EXPEDITION, SPONSORED

BLOO-WAH MOON, YA SAW ME STANDIN ALO

OFF.

MESSAGE PLAY BACK.

HELLO.

YOU'VE REACHED TWO-SIX SEVEN-OH FOUR...

THIS IS DOCTOR J.L. RICHARDSON. I'M NOT AVAILABLE AT THE PR

SKIP THAT

YOU HAVE ZERO MESSAGES, DOCTOR.

RING TWO THREE- FIVE SIXTEEN.

RINGING.

TWO THREE FIVE ONE SIX. LUKISH PH.D.

IF YOU'RE A STUDENT WITH A SCHEDUALING PROBLEM

CONSULT WITH MY GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT.

IF THIS IS A PERSONAL MESSAGE, PLEASE WAIT FOR THE TONE.

THANK YOU.

HELLO, DIANE. JEFFERSON HERE.

CONGRADULATIONS ON THE CONTRACT WITH THE ACADEMIC PRESS.

I UNDERSTAND THEY LIKED YOUR TEXT FOR THE MALEVICH BIOGRAPHY.
THE WORD CAME WITH MY RETURNED MANUSCRIPT.
RIGHT. WELL, SEE YOU IN THE NEW YEAR.
LED
ZEPPELIN !
BACH
"CHAPTER ONE: REBIRTH"
IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY A SERIES OF IDEAS WAS REDISCOVERED

WITH THE IMPLICATION THAT THE INDIVIDUAL WAS A SOVEREIGN BEING, INDEPENDENT FROM ALL COLLECTIVES,
FREE FROM PAST MODES OF THOUGHT.
ARE YOU GETTING ALL THIS, JAMES?
THIS INDIVIDUALIST PHILOSOPHY FAVORED POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS FAVORING LIBERTY
IN SEAPORTS TO THE NORTH SUCH AS FLANDERS,
BUT INDEPENDENT,
THERE GREW FROM A NEW MERCHANT CLASS PATRONS, NEITHER CHURCH NOR STATE.
WITH MONEY AND TASTE, AND AN INTEREST IN THE ARTS.
THESE PATRONS BROUGHT THE MEANS FOR ARTISTS TO CREATE WORKS FREELY.
WITHOUT NEED TO PLEASE ORTHODOXY OR THE STATE'S IDEOLOGY.
FREED FROM THE DESIGNS OF AUTHORITIES, THE ARTISTS WERE NATURALLY ENCOURAGED
TO EXPERIMENT, TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN RULES.
THE RESULT WAS THE RENAISSANCE.

SEE JAMES? YOU CAN BURN THE PAGES...
BUT THE IDEAS REMAIN
LOOK AT ME.
MY STUDENTS' ESSAYS.

MY SILK TIE. MY VAN DER WYDEN PRINTS.

HOT COFFEE.

THE SUN AT DAWN, THE MOON AT NIGHT.

RACHMANINOFF, HENDRIX. BACH.

BUT ALWAYS SOMETHING.

SOMETHING ACHING.

WALLS. REJECTION SLIPS. BARBS BEHIND POLITE SMILES.

AND WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SHOW FOR YOUR EFFORTS, RICHARDSON?

BUT THERE IS MY WORK.

YOU MAY SAY THAT BY DAY, BUT AT NIGHT YOU LIE ALONE!

NO WOMAN'S BLOOD TO WARM YOU.

NEVER TO INHALE HER SCENT AS SHE LIES NEXT TO YOU...

NEVER TO PLACE A GENTLE TOUCH TO HER UNTROUBLED BROW.

NEVER TO BRUSH A STRAY LOCK FROM HER SLEEPING EYE.

AS SHE SLEEPS, PEACEFULLY.

THESE YEARS, THIS STRUGGLE FOR MEANING.

THE WORDS IN ALL THE BOOKS.

AND WHO CARES TO SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW OF MADRID?

OF VOLTAIRE?

THE MOHAVE.

THE TASTE OF COGNAC.

THE CATHEDRALS.

THE TATTOO.

THE GREEN VOLVO ON VENICE BEACH.

THE FIRST KISS, STOLEN BEHIND THE SYCAMORES.

AND IT'S ENSUING POETRY.

KICKED OUT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL

LAUGHING ALL THE WAY.

THE WICKED ROOSTER.

DRAWN BLOOD FROM YOUR ANKLE

WAY BACK IN THE ROLLING GREEN

WHEN THE WORLD WAS SO MUCH SIMPLER AND SMALLER.

YOU HAVE YOUR MAHOGANY STUDY

YOU■ ■AME PUBLISHED IN A BOOK SOMEPLACE.

AND ART.

YOU

THAT CAN'T BE ALL.

OR, I CAN'T BE THE ONLY ONE TO KNOW THIS.

CHRIST. I NEED SOME AIR. TO CLEAR MY HEAD.

YES. SOME AIR.

I CAN'T BE THE ONLY ONE

IN MY LIFE.

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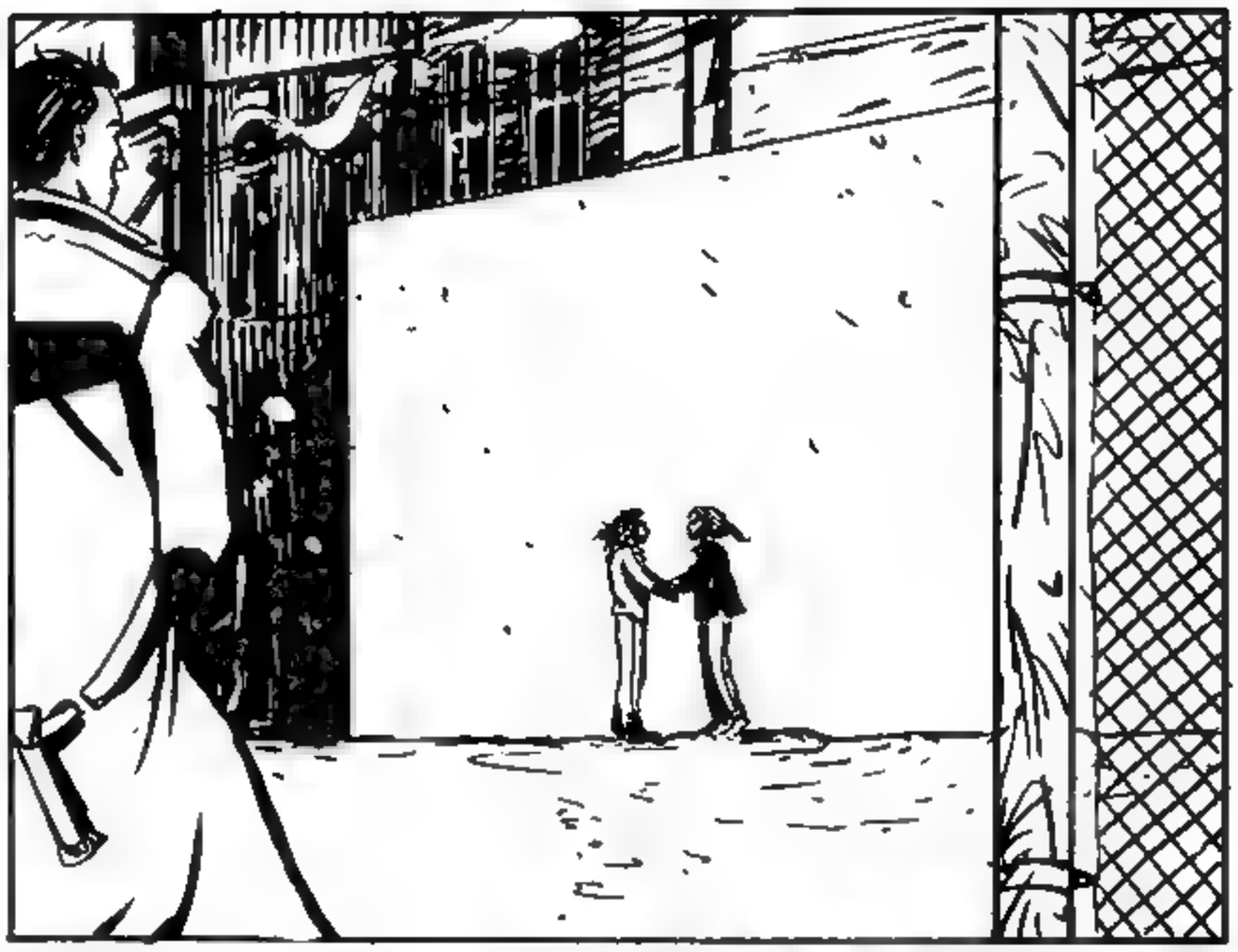
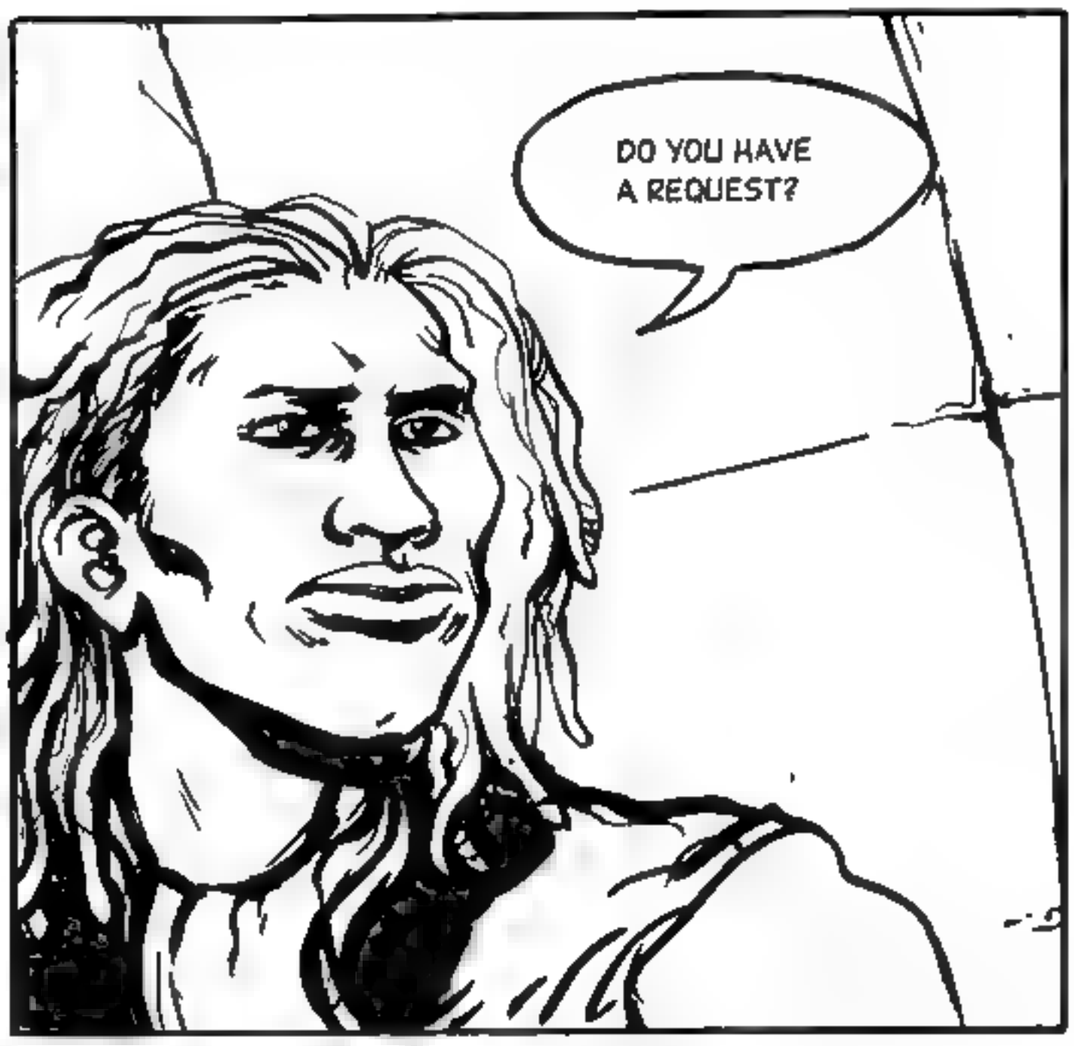


PHRODIS

M'SIEU?


DO YOU HAVE A REQUEST?

UHH...
I DO.

WOW
YOU'RE DOCTOR RICHARDSON, AREN'T YOU.
I, AH

ART HISTORY.
ITALIAN. LATE RENAISSANCE. BAROQUE.

I USED TO TEACH THE BAROQUE, YES. ARE YOU A STUDENT OF MINE?

I WAS. I QUIT.
OH MY. I SEE. WHY?
TV

I DECIDED IT WAS GETTING IN THE WAY OF LEARNING.
I SEE.

OH, BUT

BUT I NEVER FORGOT WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT ARTISTS WHO REJECTED TRADITION...

WHO INSISTED ON OBSERVING REALITY, AND PAINTING

PAINTING WHAT THEY SAW

THIS ISN'T COMING OUT VERY WELL.

WELL... DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE?

DO I? I MEAN, YES. CARAVAGGIO.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. PAUL. SEE?

YOU CARRY A PRINT OF THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. PAUL AROUND IN YOUR COAT POCKET...

YES. ALONG WITH MY ALVIN WRENCH, A LIGHTER, AND MY CREDIT CARDS.

JUST LOOK AT THIS EXPRESSION.

PAINFULLY HUMAN, ISN'T IT? LIKE THE BLUES.

THE BLUES?

YEAH. STRUGGLING WITHOUT GIVING IN.

THAT MEANS SOMETHING TO ME.

...

PARDON.

WOULD YOU CARE TO SIT DOWN?

THANKS.

EXCUSE ME.

SO.

YES. IS THERE SOMETHING I CAN DO FOR YOU?

AN OUTLINE OF SPRING COURSES? NO...

MAYBE A COMPLAINT AGAINST THE SCHOOL?

I JUST WANTED TO TALK TO YOU.

I JUST LIKED THE STUFF YOU TAUGHT.

I LIKED THE IDEAS.

NEW YORK TIMES

I COULD GO.

NO - NO. I DIDN'T MEAN TO OFFEND YOU.

THIS IS MY STOP.

OH.

IT WAS NICE MEETING YOU AGAIN...?

NOEL.

NOEL.

LISTEN, DOCTOR ARE YOU HUNGRY? YOU EAT? I KNOW A PLACE..?

OH, I CAN'T. I COULDN'T

RIGHT. OF COURSE.

I'M SORRY. SEE YOU.

NOEL!

WAIT!

WHAT KIND OF PLACE IS IT?
PAKISTANI.

FIRDOS
AH, THE FIRDOS -- OF COURSE.

I HAVEN'T BEEN HERE IN AGES. NOT SINCE .

SINCE YOU BROUGHT YOUR WIFE?

GOOD EVENING.
TEA, PLEASE.
I'M NOT MARRIED.

WHAT A COINCIDENCE.
AND, SIR? FOR YOU?

OH, TEA. THAT'S FINE.
THAT YOU WERE ON THE TRAIN, I MEAN.

YES. I HAPPENED TO BE LISTENING TO A BUSKER.
WHEN WERE YOU A STUDENT OF MINE?

FOUR YEARS AGO.

HMM.

YES. I DO REMEMBER YOU. YOU'D

I'D WHAT?

YOU WERE THE KIND OF STUDENT WHO ASKED QUESTIONS I COULDN'T ANSWER

HEH. THAT SOUNDS LIKE A FISH, DOCTOR.

THE TEA

A FISH, HUH?

SOUND AS IT MAY, IT'S THE TRUTH.

THANKS.

YOUR MENUS.

WHY DID YOU QUIT?

SCHOOL IS A FACTORY.

NO OFFENSE.

THEY TEACH YOU TO JUMP AT BELLS.

I KNOW IT WASN'T ALWAYS LIKE THAT.

I DON'T KNOW. I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT.

THE CHICKEN DISHES ARE VERY GOOD, BUT THEIR IDEA OF HOT IS SUPER HOT.

I LEARN MORE ON MY OWN.

SO, THAT'S MY ANSWER . . . FOR NOW, AT LEAST.

BUT I'M A PROFESSOR.

THAT MUST MAKE ME A FACTORY BOSS.

DON'T SAY THAT. DON'T MOCK ME.

YOU KNOW YOU'VE BEEN THE GREAT EXCEPTION, DOCTOR.

HAVE YOU MADE YOUR SELECTIONS?

YES. HERE. THANK YOU.

...AND HOT FOR BOTH OF THEM. RIGHT, DOCTOR?

UH, YES.

WHERE WERE YOU GOING TONITE, DOCTOR?

NO WHERE IN PARTICULAR AND YOU?

HERE.

THEN TO THE VANGUARD, TO GET MY PAY.

THEN TO CAFE ARMAGEDDON. YOU KNOW THE PLACE?

NO, I DON'T.

IT'S A PERFORMANCE CLUB. MY LES PAUL IS THERE. AN... AN OLD FRIEND HAS IT, AND IT'S THERE.

I NEED IT FOR MY MUSIC.

MUSIC?

I USED TO PLAY IN CLUBS. IT WAS OKAY. THEY PAID YOU.

OTHERWISE, YOU PAY THEM. IF I HAD A BAD TIME, I STILL GOT PAID. YOU SEE.

BUT NOW I NEED TO EXPERIMENT.

...EXPERIMENT?

YEAH, SEE... NO, IT'D BORE YOU.

NO, OKAY. LISTEN.

SOUND.

YOU KNOW WHAT SOUND IS?

MOLECULES VIBRATING IN SPACE. CHAOS. THE DUMB UNIVERSE.

BUT YOU CAN REARRANGE THINGS. THERE ARE RULES YOU CAN FIND, IF YOU TRY.

IT'S LIKE SCIENCE WITH LOTS OF SOUL.

THE POINT IS, I HEAR MUSIC IN MY HEAD.

I ALWAYS HAVE.

IT'S VERY BEAUTIFUL.

IT COMES AT NIGHT. WHEN I DREAM. BUT I'M NOT ALL ASLEEP WHEN DREAMING. SEE?

CRASHING, THUNDEROUS. VIOLENT.

THEN WHISPERING, MELODIC.

SOUNDS NO INSTRUMENT I KNOW OF CAN SPEAK.

YOUR ORDER, MA'AM.

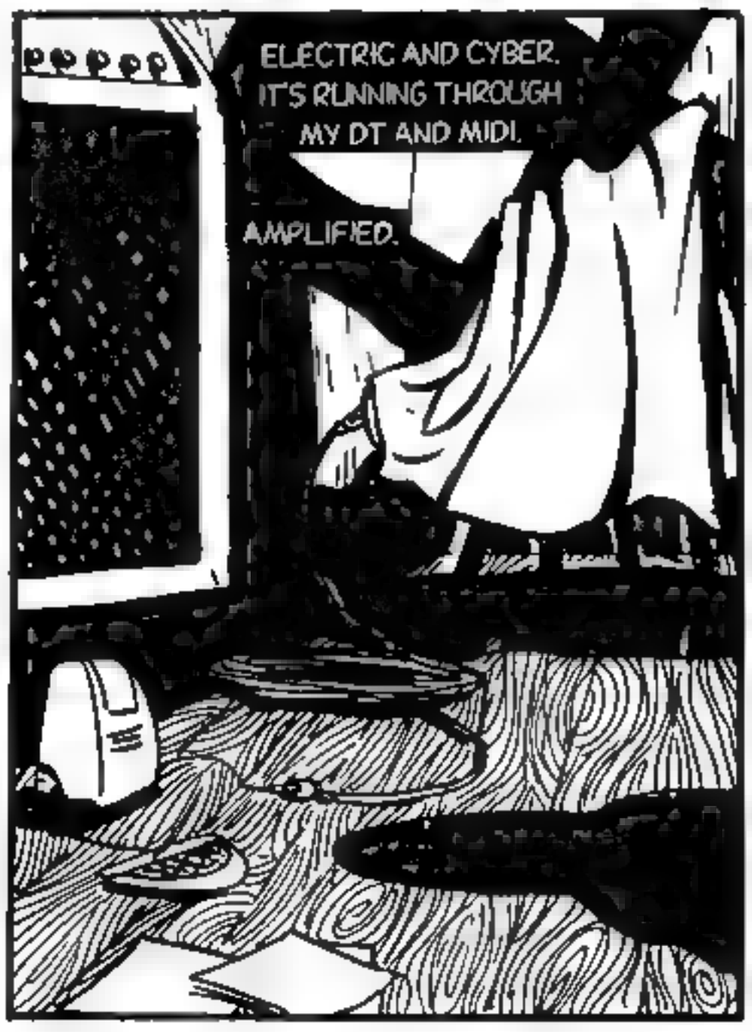
SIR.

SO. I DECIDED MAYBE I SHOULD JUST MAKE THE INSTRUMENT.

IT TAKES A LOT OF JUST SITTING IN THE DARK, WITHOUT MOVING.
WITHOUT MAKING A SOUND. JUST THINKING.
YES?

UH HUH. THEN I TOOK MY VIOLIN AND TWO OF MY OLD JUNKY STRATOCASTERS AND CHANGED THEM AROUND.
MESSED THEM UP. CHANGED STRINGS, LENGTHS, TONES, AND OTHER STUFF..

OH, IT'S AN UGLY THING TO LOOK AT.


ELECTRIC AND CYBER. IT'S RUNNING THROUGH MY DT AND MIDI.
AMPLIFIED.

I FOUND A NEW KIND OF CHAOS.

OR PART OF THE OLD CHAOS NOBODY ELSE DISCOVERED.

AFTER A WHILE...

AND HOW IS EVERYTHING?

OH, COULD I HAVE SOME ICE WATER, PLEASE?

AND THEN, I HEARD MY MUSIC, DISGUISED...

AND I FOUND ARRANGEMENTS WHICH I PULL OUT, AND IT COMES CLOSE...

AND I CAN MAKE IT COME CLOSER.

INCREDIBLE.

INCREDIBLE!

ARE YOU JUST SAYING THAT?

NO, I'M NOT. IT'S AMAZING. HOW ARE YOU DOING IT?

I JUST TOLD YOU.

YOUR WATER, MA'AM.

NO, NO. I MEAN, THE IDEAS. WHERE DO THE IDEAS COME FROM.

I DON'T KNOW IT ALL. JUST COMES.

YOU SEE, IT'S ALL IN MY HEAD NOW. BUT DON'T WANT IT THERE.

I WANT IT TO COME OUT.

OH. I DON'T KNOW. IT MUST BORE YOU.

IT DOESN'T BORE ME.

YOU MEAN . . .

I MEAN, TELL ME MORE.

YOU'RE SERIOUS.

YES, GO ON.

THERE SHE IS.

C'MON
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO MEET US AT THE BRAINBAR

OH, MAN. I FORGOT

WHAT TIME IS IT NOW?

EIGHT-THIRTY.

LET'S GO, BABY.

HANG ON, VIV. CAN'T YOU SEE SHE'S WITH HER UNCLE OR SOMETHING?

C'MON.

HEY, AREN'T YOU A TEACHER AT THE UNIVERSITY– ANCIENT HISTORY OR SOMETHING?

THESE GIRLS ARE WITH THE KING KUSH EXPERIENCE, DOCTOR.

HEARD OF US?

UH, NO ACTUALLY.

LET'S GO.

I ASKED THEM TO MEET ME HERE. IT'S A SHORT WALK TO THE VANGUARD, WHERE WE ALL WORK.

AND THE STREETS JUST AREN'T SAFE ANYMORE.

COME ON, NICHOLSON, HERE TALKING ABOUT YOUR GUITAR-VIOLIN THING. LET'S GO

I REALLY MUST GO.

RIGHT, ME TOO. I HAVE A LOT OF ESSAYS TO GRADE THIS WEEKEND.

OKAY. YOU GO AHEAD, MISTER. NOEL?

MAYBE WE'LL SEE EACH OTHER ON THE TRAINS AGAIN.

YES. THAT'D BE PLEASANT.

MUCH TOO OLD, NOEL.

YOU COULD BE A LITTLE MORE PICKY.

VIV...

"THAT'D BE PLEASANT."

UGH.

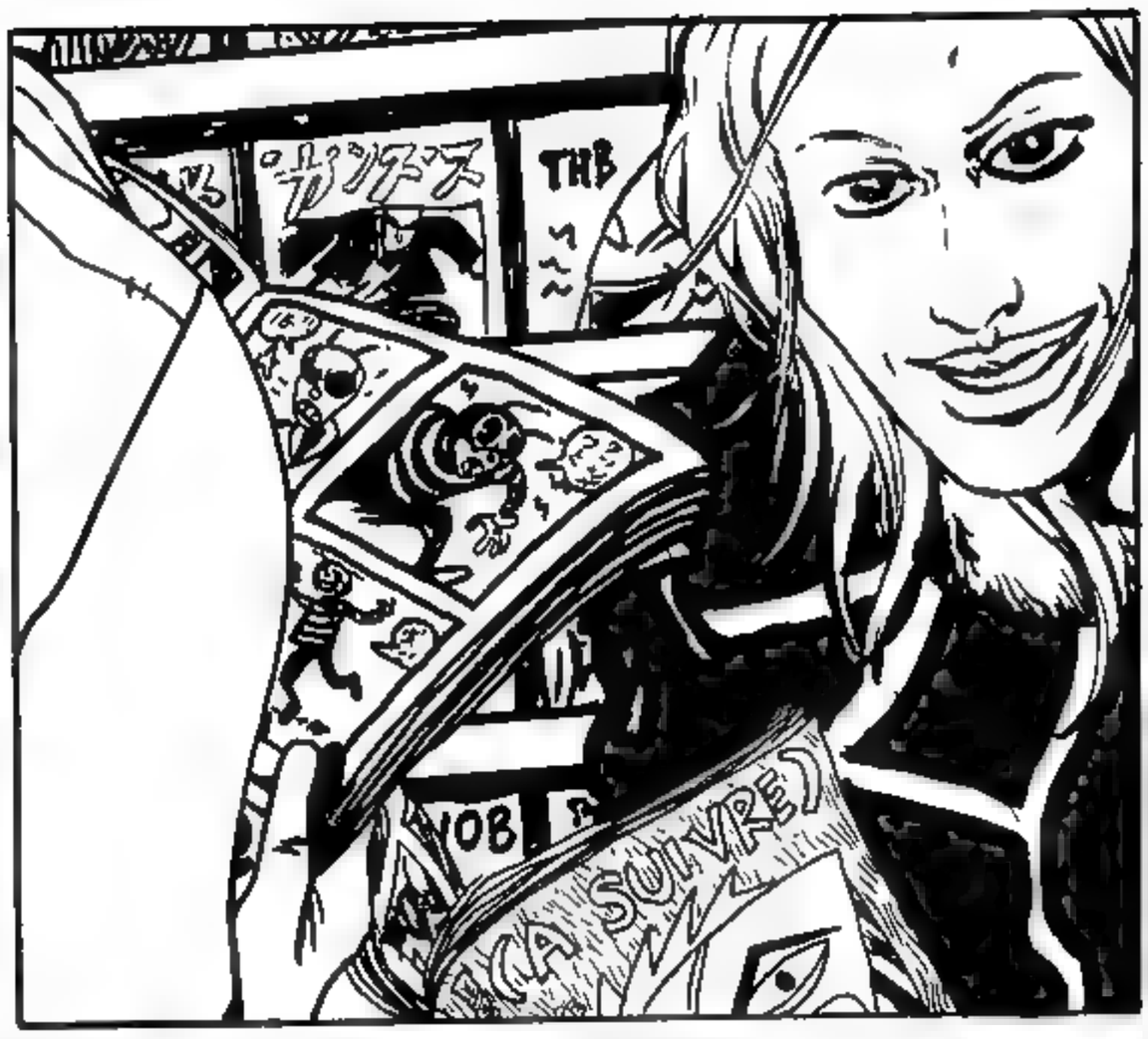
...DARE I DISTURB THE DUMB UNIVERSE?

FIRLOS

KURN

SIGARRILLO

JAVA


THB
YOB

JUICEY

NEW THIS WEEK
My Achin' Heart

ICE

217A
VANGUARD

VANGUARD
EXPERIENCE

SLIM - IF YER A COP OR A PUSHER
WHAT'RE MY CHANCES OF YOU LETTING ME IN?

I'M AN ART HISTORY PROFESSOR.

THAT'S A GOOD ONE.
ART HISTORY. I'LL HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT.
I'M LOOKING FOR SOMEONE.

ALRIGHT, ART HISTORY PROFESSOR. MAYBE THEY'LL HELP YOU INSIDE.
AND NO FUNNY STUFF. I PACK.

KING

STAGE
2ND FLOOR

OF ALL THE TIMES THIS THING COULD BREAK DOWN...

HERE. TRY THE NUMBER SIX.

WHO'S THAT?

HUH?

OUT THERE. SOME GUY IN THE LOBBY.

THERE IS. LOOK.

WELL, I'LL GET RID OF HIM.

HEY!

HEY YOU! WHERE YOU GOING?

OH, I WAS JUST GOING TO...

NO YOU WEREN'T. TEN O'CLOCK.

BUT I'M JUST LOOKING FOR SOMEONE.

YEAH, YEAH.

I DON'T CARE IF YOU WERE LOOKING FOR FLIPPO THE HIPPO. TEN O'CLOCK.

HOLD THIS.

LOOK, MAN.

IT'S BEEN A LONG DAY.

NOTHING WORKS, WE'RE SHORT ON BEER, UNDER-STAFFED... JUST COME BACK AT TEN.

BUT I'M NOT HERE FOR THAT.

I'M LOOKING FOR SOMEONE. SHE MIGHT BE GONE BY THEN. COULDN'T...? COULDN'T WE...?

HEY! HEY!

WHERE'S THAT NUMBER SIX? HURRY UP?

JUST COME ON BACK AT TEN, ALRIGHT?

ALRIGHT. SORRY.

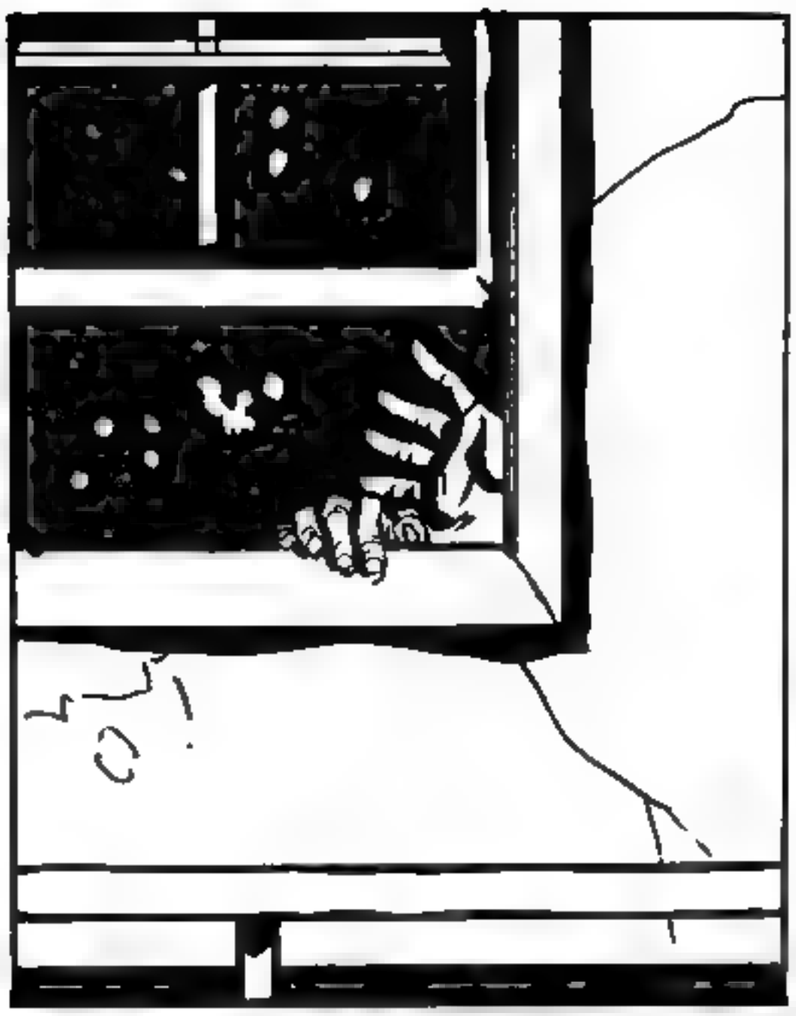
DEC 21

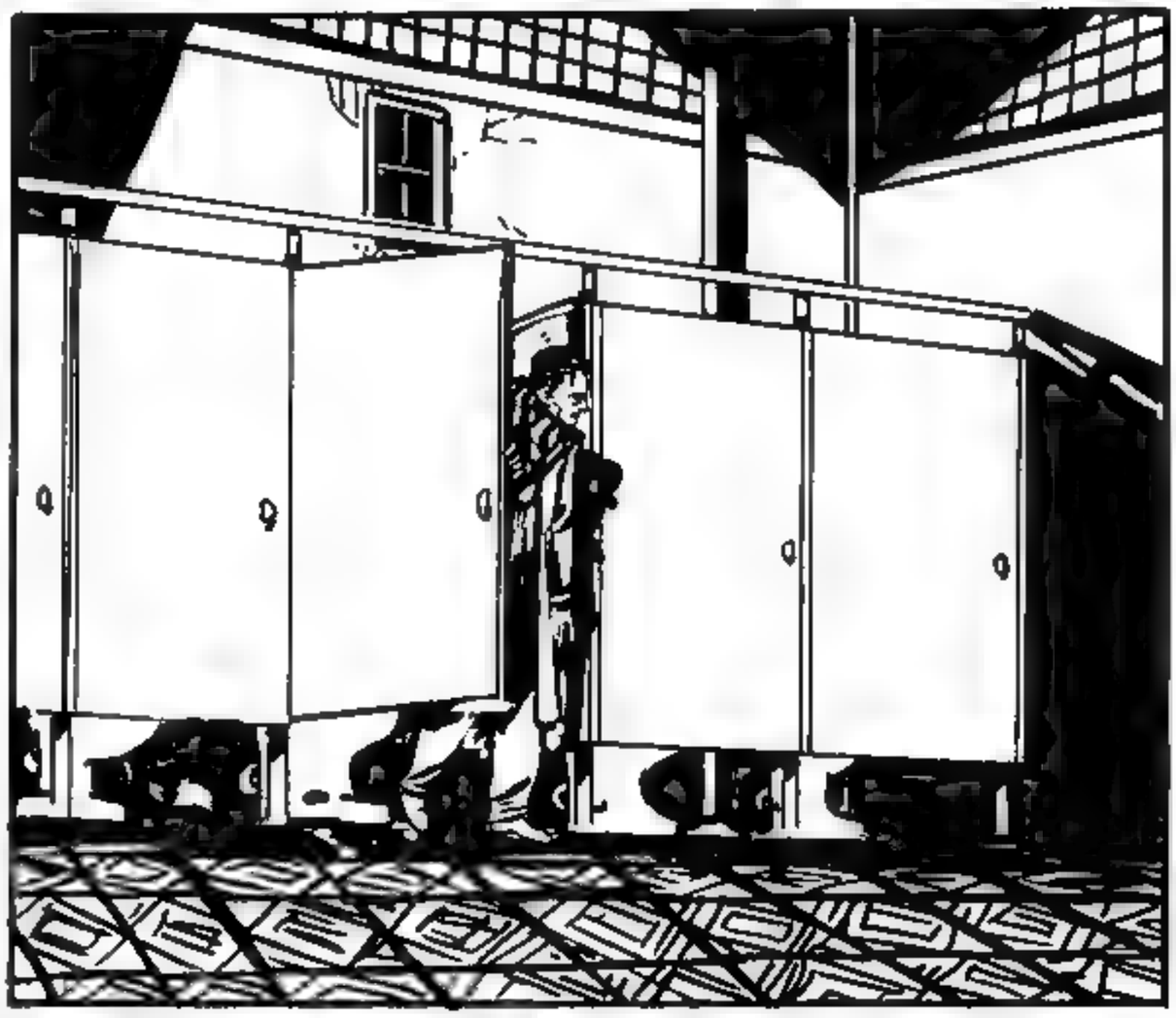
KUSH

The
KING KUSH

VANG

LOCKED.





HUFF
HUFF.
PHEW.

WOMEN

EXIT

LET'S BREAK, BOYS.

TEN MINUTES.

HI. HOW YA DOIN'?

FINE.

HAVE YOU SEEN A GIRL, BLONDISH-RED HAIR, COME IN HERE? NAMED NOEL?

YEAH, SURE. NOEL.

IT'S HARD SAYING IF I CAN HELP YA, THOUGH, MISTER

SHE JUST SPLIT.

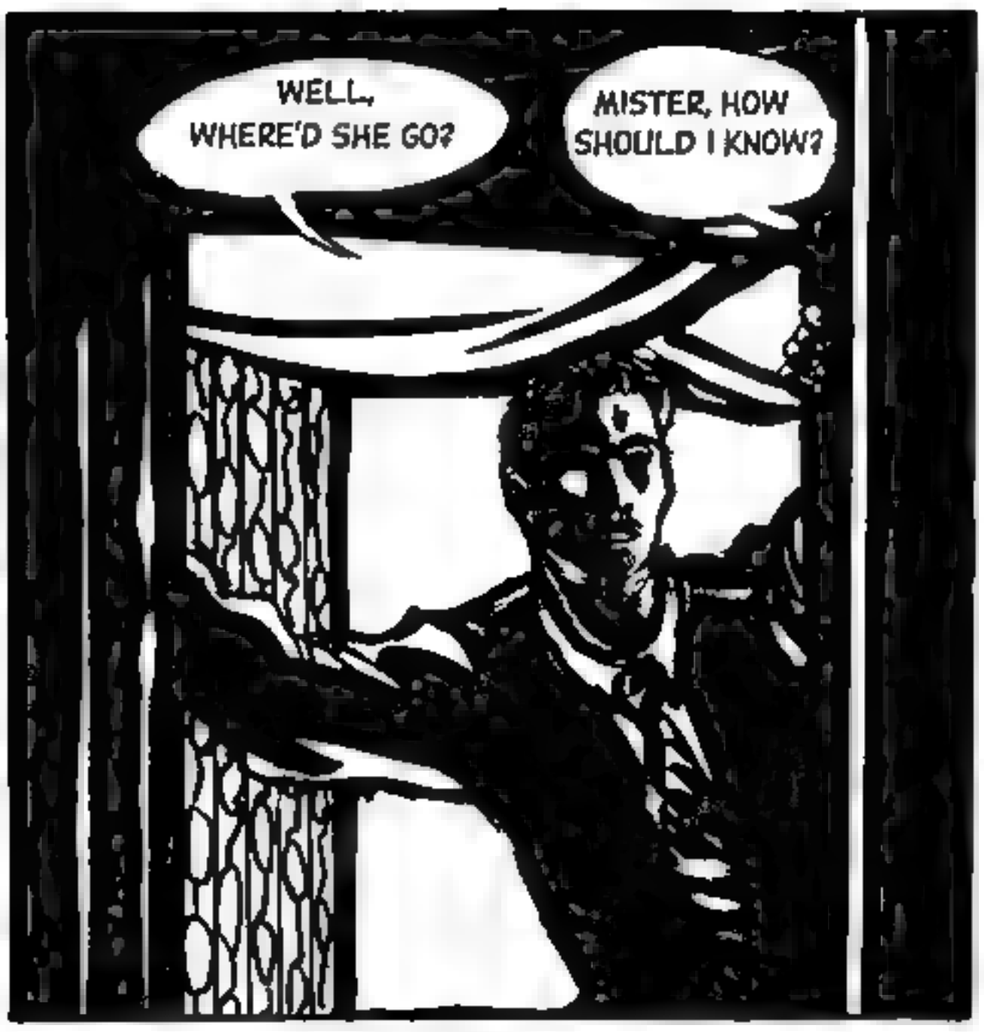
JUST SPLIT?

HEY!

YA WON'T FIND HER DOWN THERE, MAN!

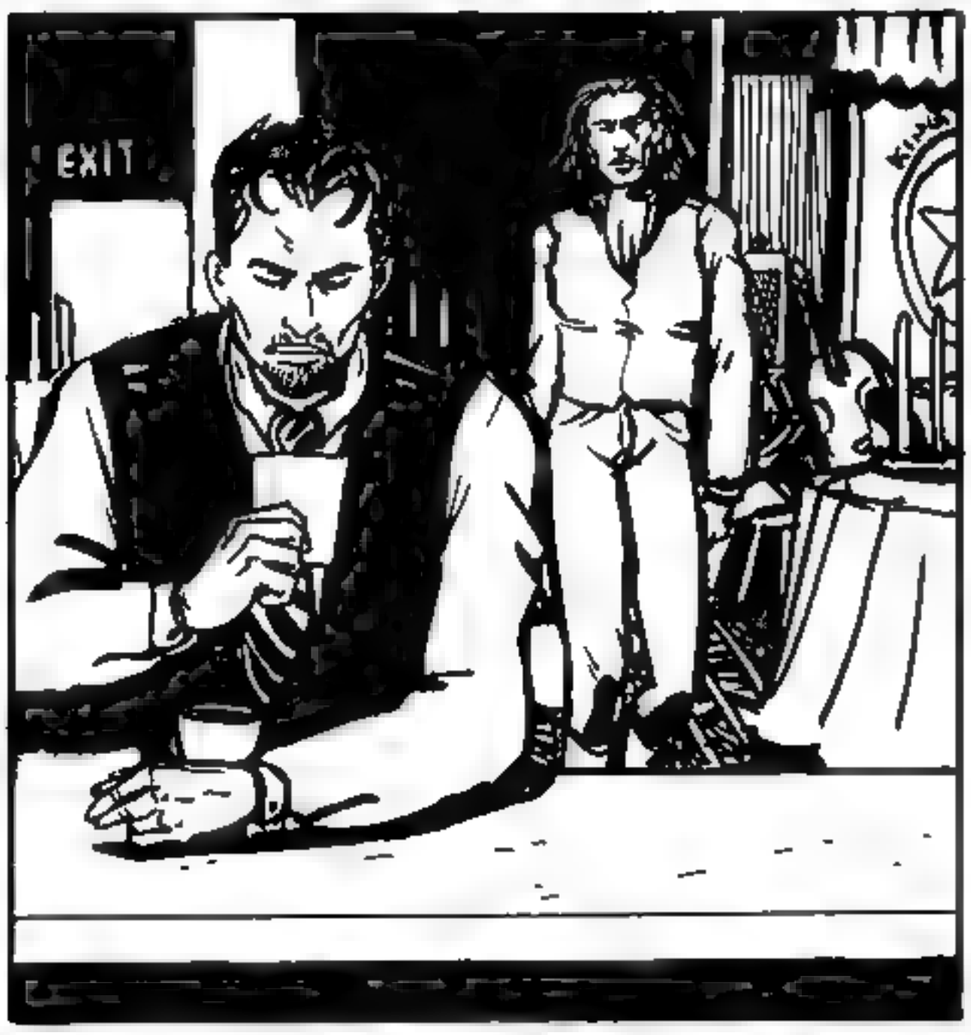
IT'S A MAZE OUT THE BACK WAY. SORRY.

EXIT


WELL, WHERE'D SHE GO?
MISTER, HOW SHOULD I KNOW?

HEY, KUSH. WHAT ARE WE OPENING WITH?

WE'LL START UP WITH "DIDN'T MAKE MYSELF, BABY".
I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
COOL.


EXIT

DO YOU ALWAYS GO FROM SUBWAY TUNNELS TO JAZZ CLUBS . . .

OR IS IT YOUR BIRTHDAY?

I COULD ASK THE SAME OF YOU.

AH, BUT ME, I WORK HERE. I PLAY IN THE TUNNELS FOR SENTIMENTAL REASONS.

BUT YOU . . .

AH, I SEE.

YOU'RE DOCTOR RICHARDSON.

YES, YOU ARE, M'SIELL

ALTHOUGH I'VE ALREADY SAID TOO MUCH.

HOW

TO BE SURE, M'SIELL THAT'S HERS.

SHE'S NEVER WITHOUT IT.

YOU KNOW HER?

OF COURSE. I AM A FRIEND.

AND YOU WANT TO BE MORE?

STOP JOKING AROUND.

IT IS NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF, M'SIEU.

ALL THE SAME, ONE MUST HAVE THE EYES TO SEE IT. AND I DO.

LISTEN, KUSH.

DO YOU KNOW A POEM CALLED "THE LOVE SONG OF J. A. PRUFROCK"

NO.

IN THE POEM A MAN IS STANDING IN A STAIRWELL.

THE STAIRS, THEY LEAD TO A ROOM WHERE A CERTAIN GIRL IS LIVING.

BUT HE WAVERS. HE HESITATES. HE CAN'T DECIDE WHETHER TO KNOCK ON THE DOOR, OR SLINK AWAY..

I WOULD KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

SO WOULD I.

EXIT

AH.

I SEE.

HERE, M'SIELL

MIND YOU.

I WOULDN'T DO THIS FOR ANYONE ELSE.

WHAT IS IT?

THIS IS THE WAY YOU WILL FIND HER.

CAFE ARMAGEDDON 3rd AT ST. MARKS

"OPEN NIGHTLY 'TIL THE END OF THE WORLD"...?

WHY ARE YOU HELPING ME?

ALRIGHT. AT LEAST TELL ME HOW I CAN THANK YOU.

COME BACK TONITE, PAY FULL COVER.

PUT SOME BREAD IN MY SLACKS...

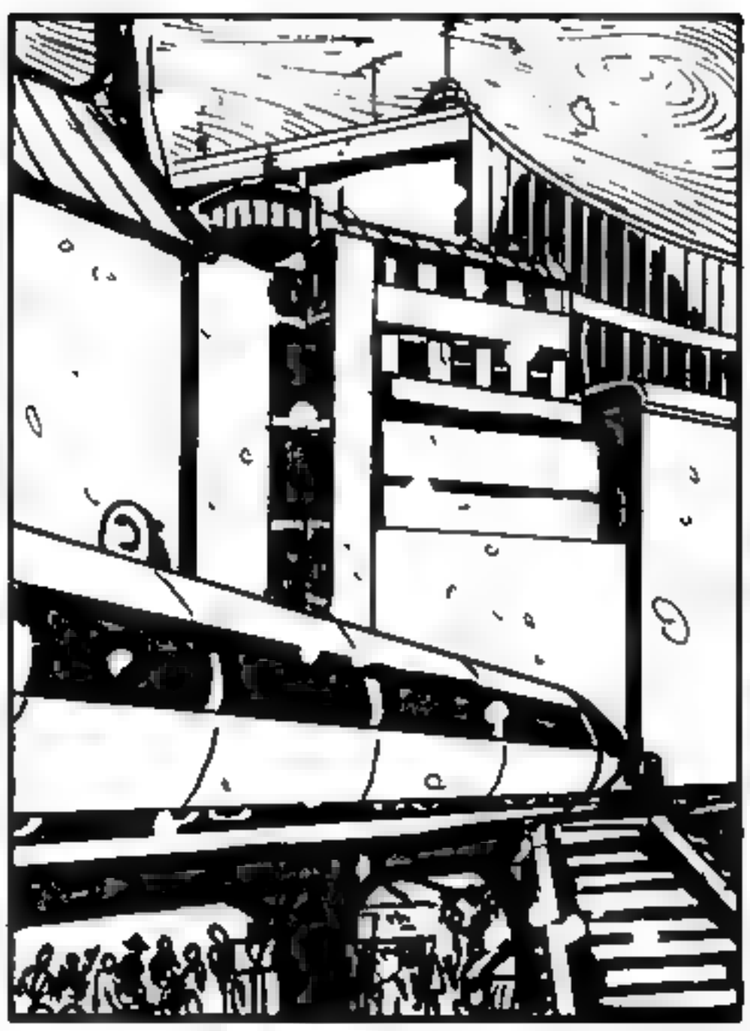
AND SOME SOUND IN YOUR EARHOLE.

HEH.

GOT WHAT YA NEED, MISTER?

YES. WHAT DO I OWE YOU FOR THE DRINKS?

NOTHING. IF YER A FRIEND OF KING KUSH, IT'S ON THE HOUSE.



CAFE ARMAGEDDON

HEAVEN! OH!

I DIGGA DOE WIDDA CRAZY HAZY DAISY!

HEAVE HO! HEAVEN! OH!

HEAVE! HO! HEAVEN! OH!

SAID I DIGGA DOE!

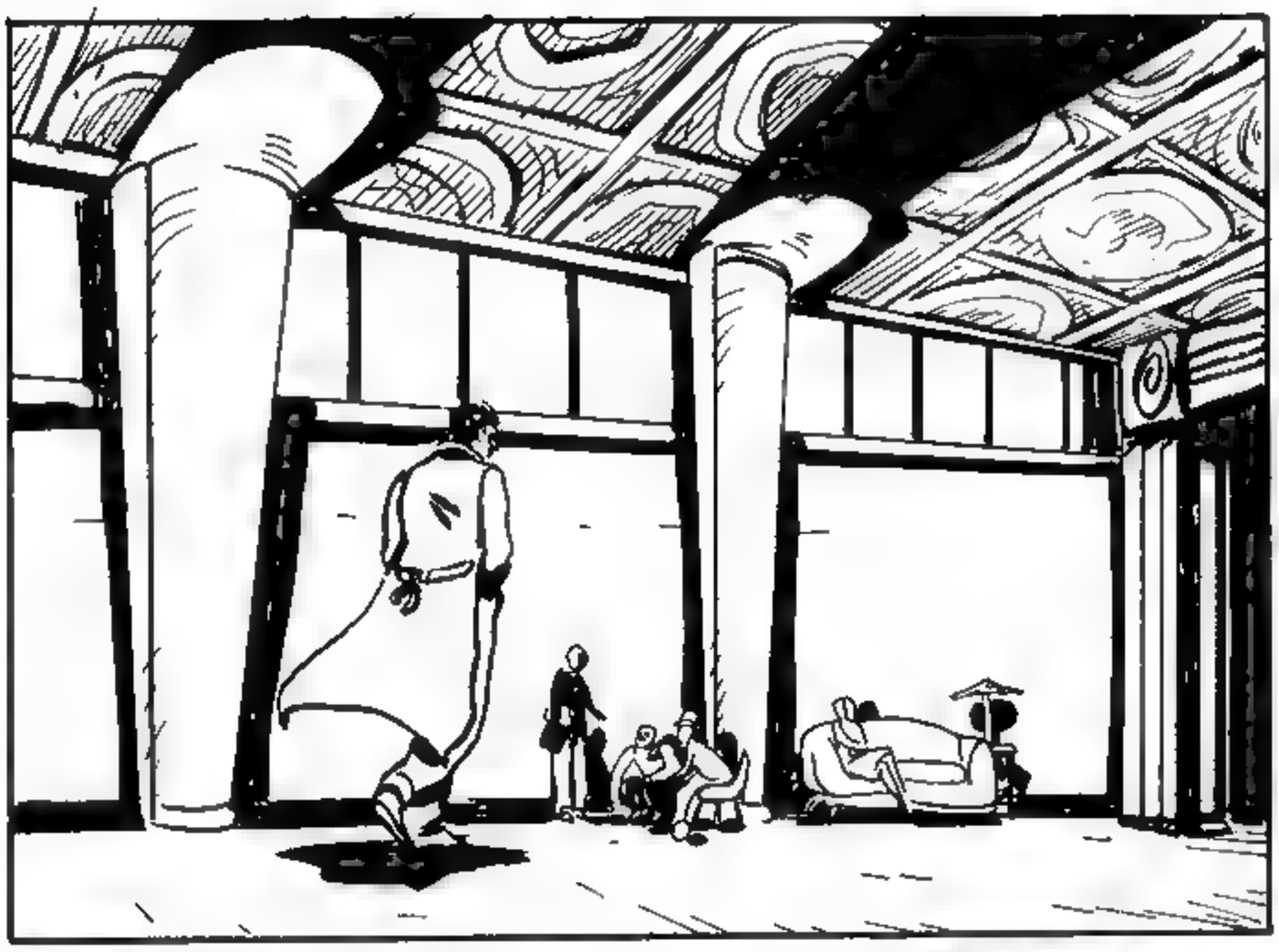
I DIGGA DOE!

YEAH!

HEAVE HO! HEAVEN!

OH!

HEAVE HO!



GOSH ALL. GIT UP!

HOW'D YA GIT SO LIT UP?
YO HEADS ON . . .
YO HEADS ON . . .

FIRE!
HEY.
I'M LOOKING FOR NOEL.

NOEL?
DON'T KNOW HER.

DO YOU GIRLS KNOW NOEL?
YEAH. CHICK WAS LEAD GUITAR FOR THE HURON
BEFORE HE GOT LEFTY.

YOU MEAN BEFORE HE HAD TO REPLACE HER WITH LEFTY.

YEAH, SURE. THAT

THAT'S HER. WHERE MAY I FIND HER?

DUNNO.

PROBABLY DOWNSTAIRS. THE DRESSING ROOM.

JUST WHO ARE YOU, ANYWAY?

YEAH.

HER UNCLE, OF COURSE

GO ON BACK, PAST THE COKE MACHINE.

ON THE LEFT.

HELLO?

Ea xó' sta qui! S. Pericle

NOEL?

THE RON

NOEL. I KNOW THIS MUST SEEM PREPOSTEROUS.

NO. NOEL, THERE'S ONE MOMENT IN A LIFE WHEN YOU FIND BEAUTY... AND..

NO.

HELLO, NOEL. I CAN'T LET TONITE GO WITHOUT..

IN HERE?

YEAH.

HE LEFT IT IN HERE.

HE KNEW YOU'D BE BY SOMETIME.

IT'S ALL BANGED UP.

I DIDN'T DO IT.

I KNOW YOU DIDN'T.

YOUR JACKET?

OH, YEAH. I WAS IN HERE BEFORE I FOUND YOU.

I'LL WAIT HERE. I WANT TO TALK TO HIM . . .

JAKE. I'LL TELL HIM TO COME AFTER THE SET.

THANKS, GOLDY

YES, I'M SORRY, TOO. HE DIDN'T TREAT YOU VERY WELL, DID HE?

NO, I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED.

I NEED YOU.

I NEED YOU FOR THE NEW INSTRUMENT

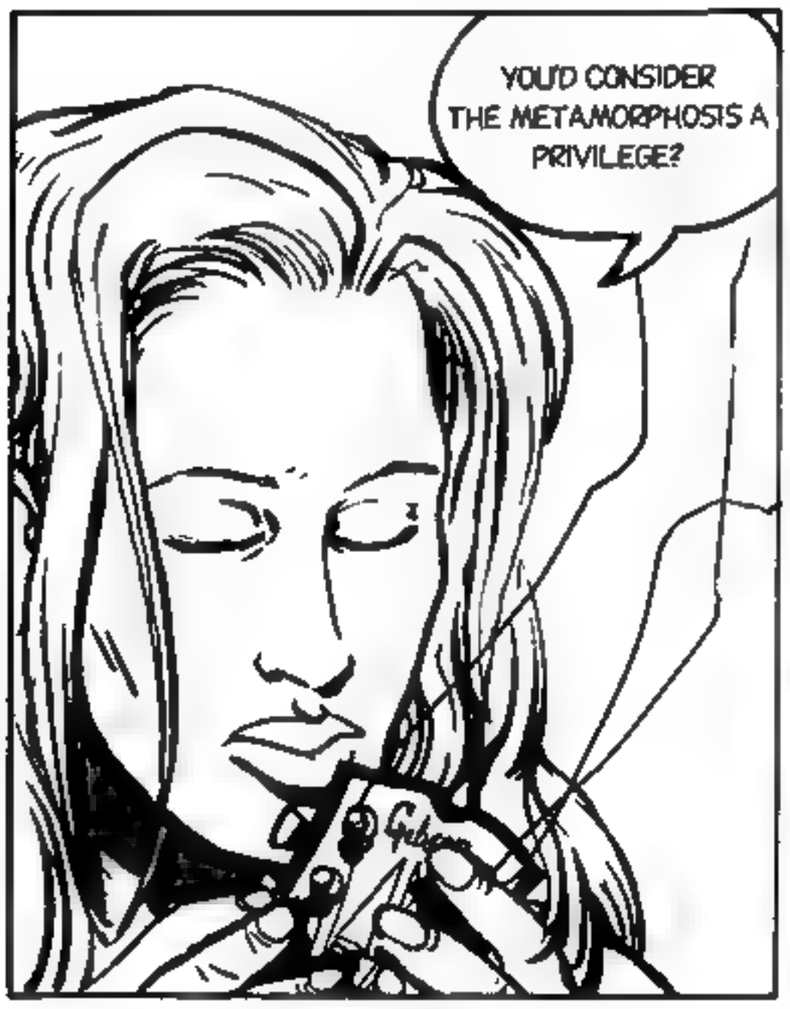
Gibson

I KNOW I'VE HAD YOU SINCE I WAS TWELVE.

I TRANSCRIBED MY FIRST SONATA ON YOU.

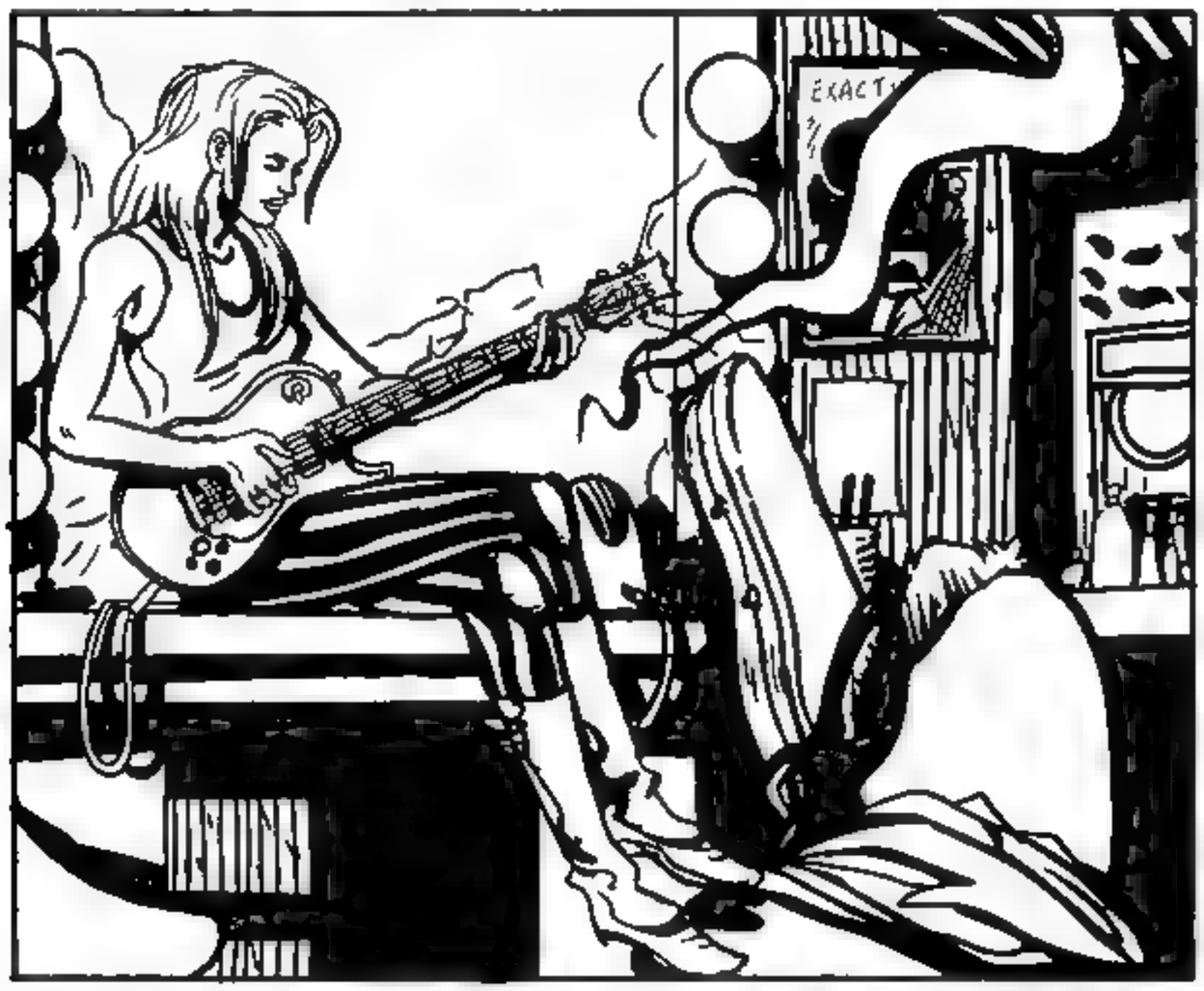
I LEARNED ALL MY ELMORE JAMES ON YOU.

WHAT'S THAT?


YOU'D CONSIDER THE METAMORPHOSIS A PRIVILEGE?

I'M FLATTERED.

AT LEAST HE DIDN'T BANG UP THE MIDI.



UH, YOUR CARAVAGGIO.

YOU, UH, LEFT IT. KUSH, HE GAVE ME A CARD, WITH THE UH . . .

HURON

I KNOW THIS MUST LOOK INSANE.

NO.

HE'S OFF.

THANKS, GOLDY.

I HAVE TO TELL TARO I'M TAKING BACK MY LES PAUL.

COME WITH ME.

NOEL.

LET ME TAKE CARE OF THIS FIRST.

THERE'S THE PROBLEM. IT GOES TO AN A SEVENTH, NOT A MINOR.

G FLAT MAJOR TO A SEVENTH. OKAY?

TARO.

I'LL BE RIGHT BACK. PRACTICE IT.

NOEL.

HAVEN'T I TOLD YOU NOT TO CALL ME BY THAT NAME?

YES, YOU HAVE.

JUST WHO AND WHO DOESN'T KNOW YOU'RE NOT REALLY AN AMERICAN INDIAN?

HEH.

OKAY. LET'S TALK. SOME PRIVATE PLACE.

HEY.

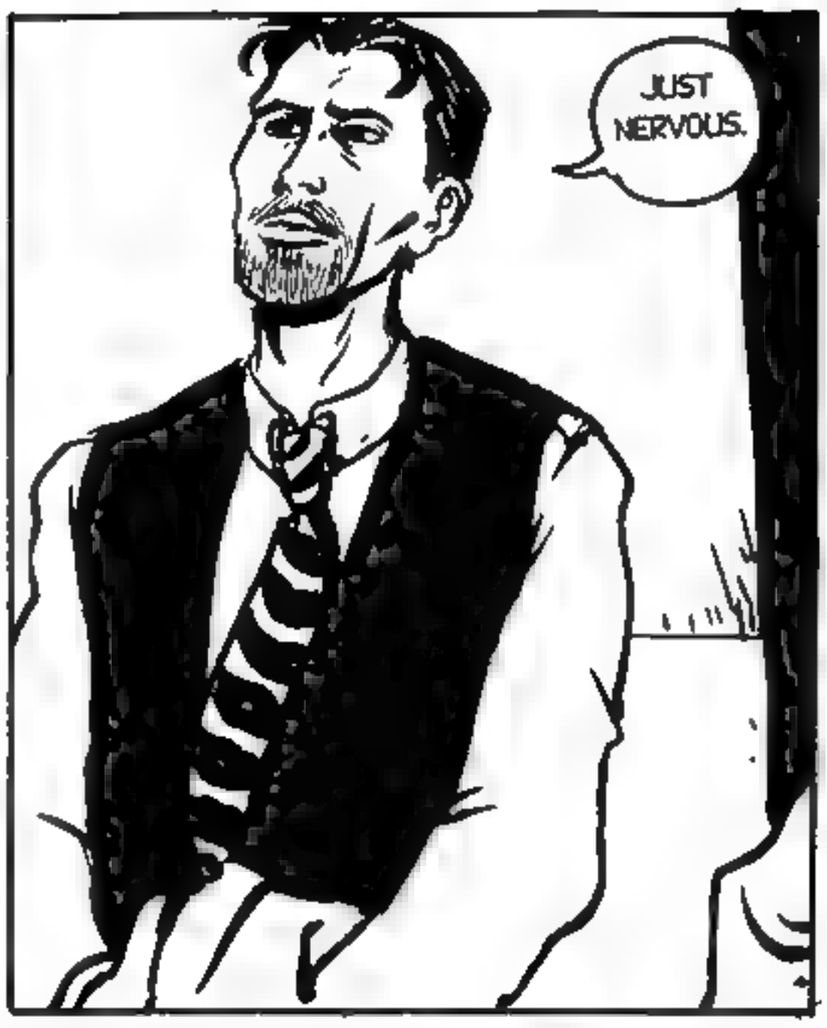
DON'T GET LOST, HURON. YOU HAVE A SOUND CHECK IN TWENTY.

I KNOW, I KNOW. DON'T GET UNRAVELLED, GOLDY.

KINDA NERVOUS, AREN'T YOU, BUD?

...YES.

SPEED? COKE? COFFEE?


JUST NERVOUS.

HEY- YOU MIND?

EXCUSE ME.

OH, TARO!

WHO IS THIS GUY, NOEL?

LET HER HAVE IT.

DON'T TOUCH HIM!

DAMN!

I'M GOING TO BE LATE FOR MY SOUND CHECK IF I HANG AROUND HERE.

OKAY. YOU CAN KEEP IT.

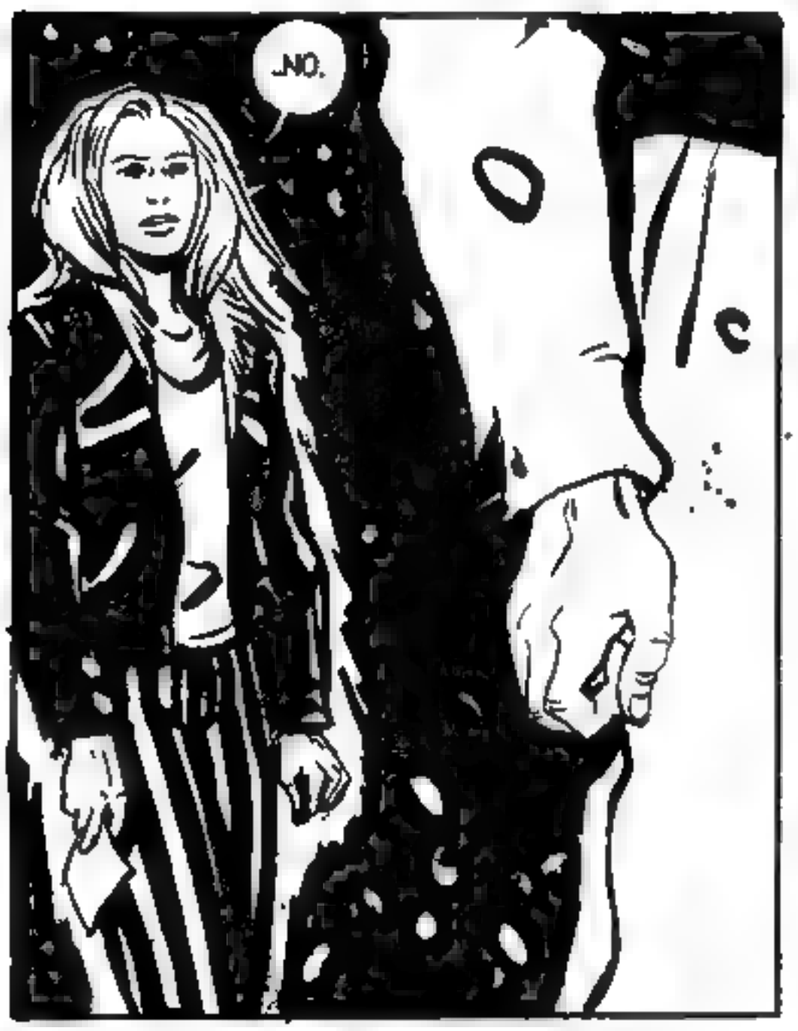
AND AS FOR YOU, YOU CAN KEEP HER!
I DON'T CARE!

YOU'RE ALL THE SAME AFTER THE FIRST DOZEN.

YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO DO THAT.
I COULD'VE HANDLED HIM. ARE YOU OKAY?

HERE.

DO THEY ALL DO THAT?


..NO.

YOU KNOW, NOEL. IF I NEVER SAW YOU AGAIN..
...THAT'D DO.

IT'D DO IF WE NEVER SPOKE AGAIN.

OR DEEPER. IT'D DO.

I THINK I COULD GO WITHOUT SEEING THE SUN SET WITH YOU.

OR FEELING WINTER END.

IF I NEVER WATCHED COMET'S STREAK WITH YOU NEAR ME.

I GUESS IT'D DO, TOO.

IF I NEVER KNEW YOUR MIND.

OR HEARD YOU BREATHE.

DON'T.

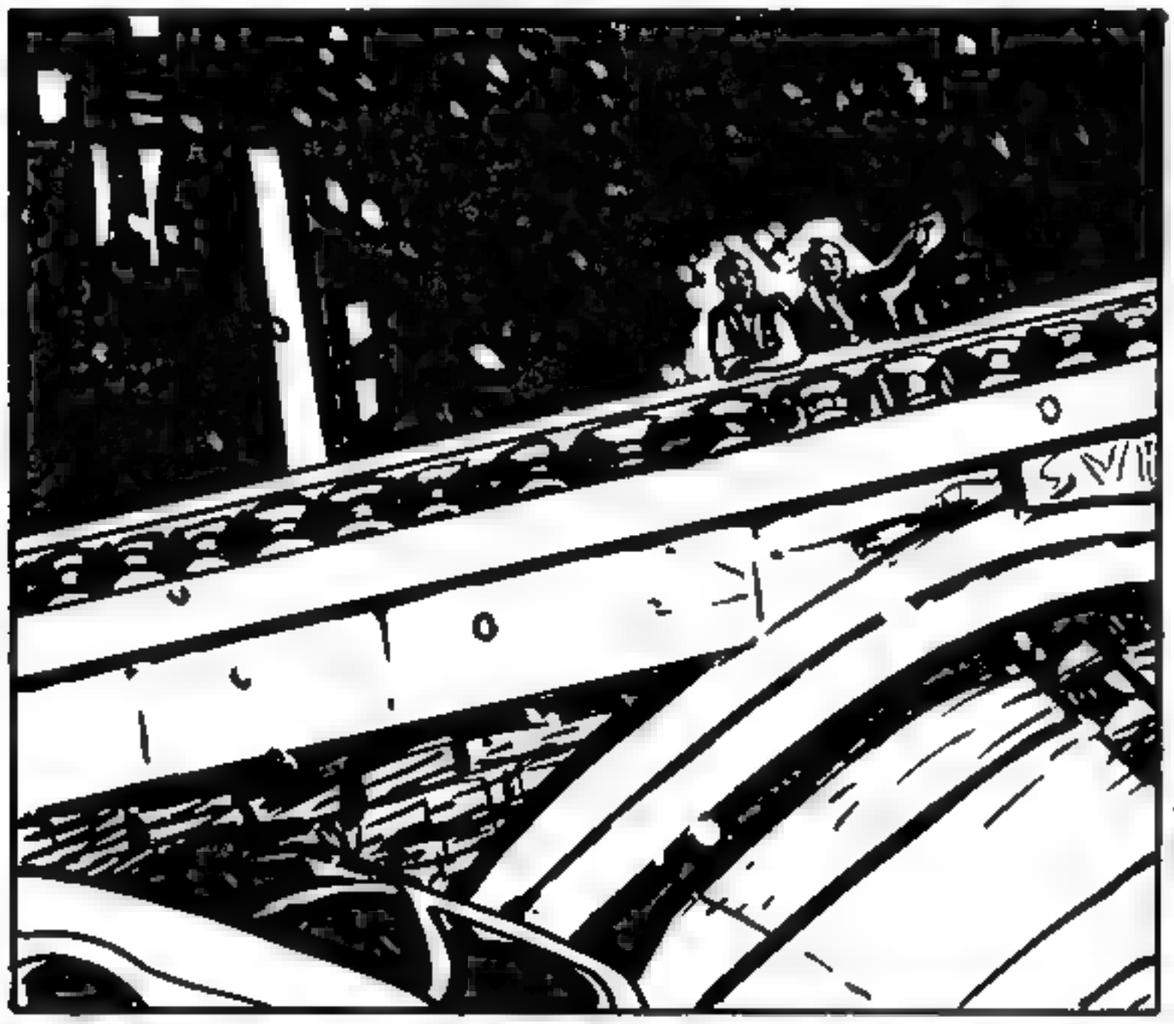
YES, I SUPPOSE I COULD GO ON WITHOUT THESE THINGS.

BUT I DON'T CARE TO TRY. WHY SHOULD I?

IN THESE... FOUR YEARS...

I'D NEVER HAVE... HOPED...

CAIC.NR



MISTER KUSH WANTS IT KNOWN THAT HE'LL BE PICKING UP YOUR TAB TONIGHT.

HE ALSO SENDS THIS MESSAGE.

Nothing IS impossible!

A
EEP

AB701

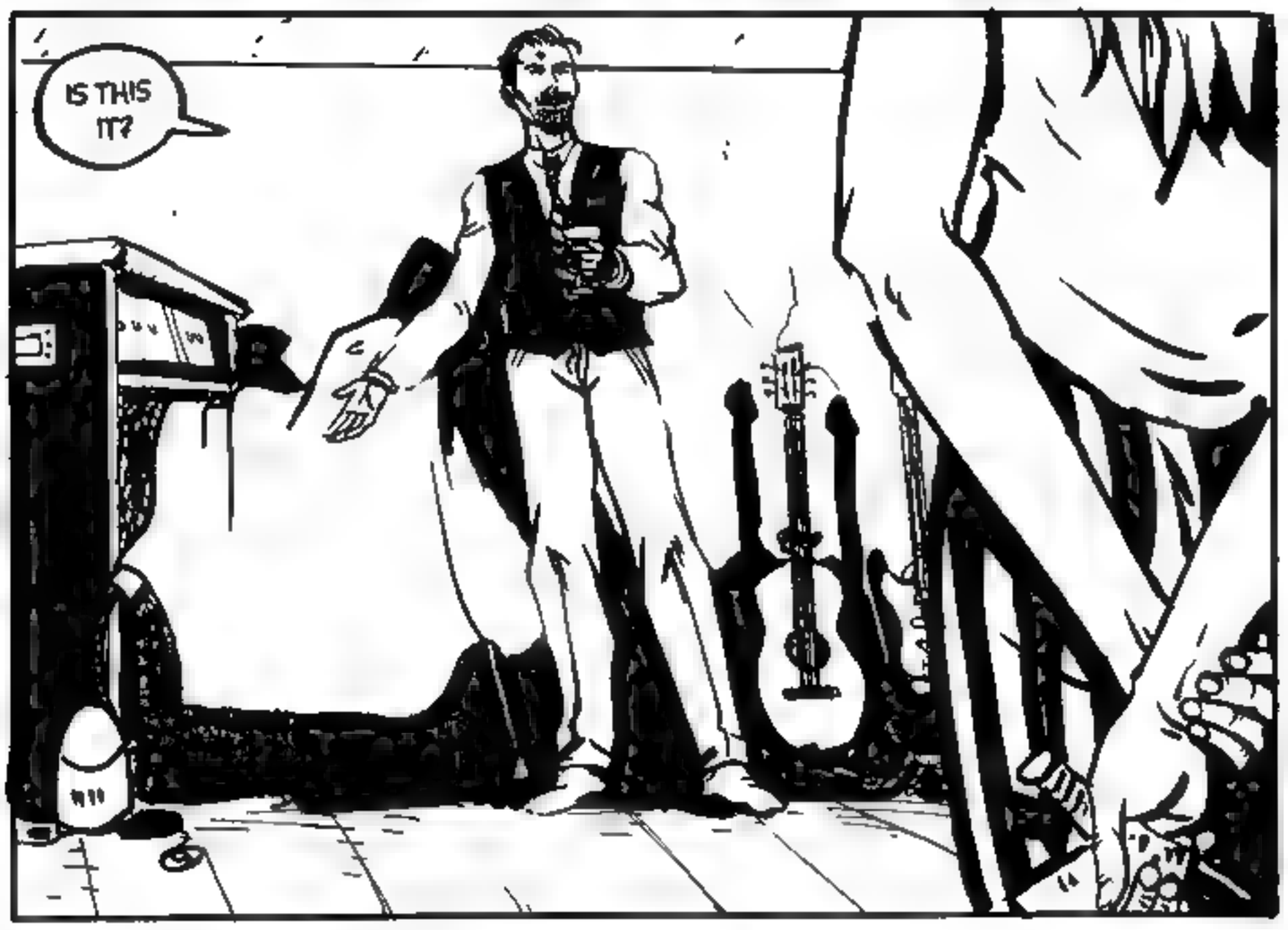
THIS IS IT.

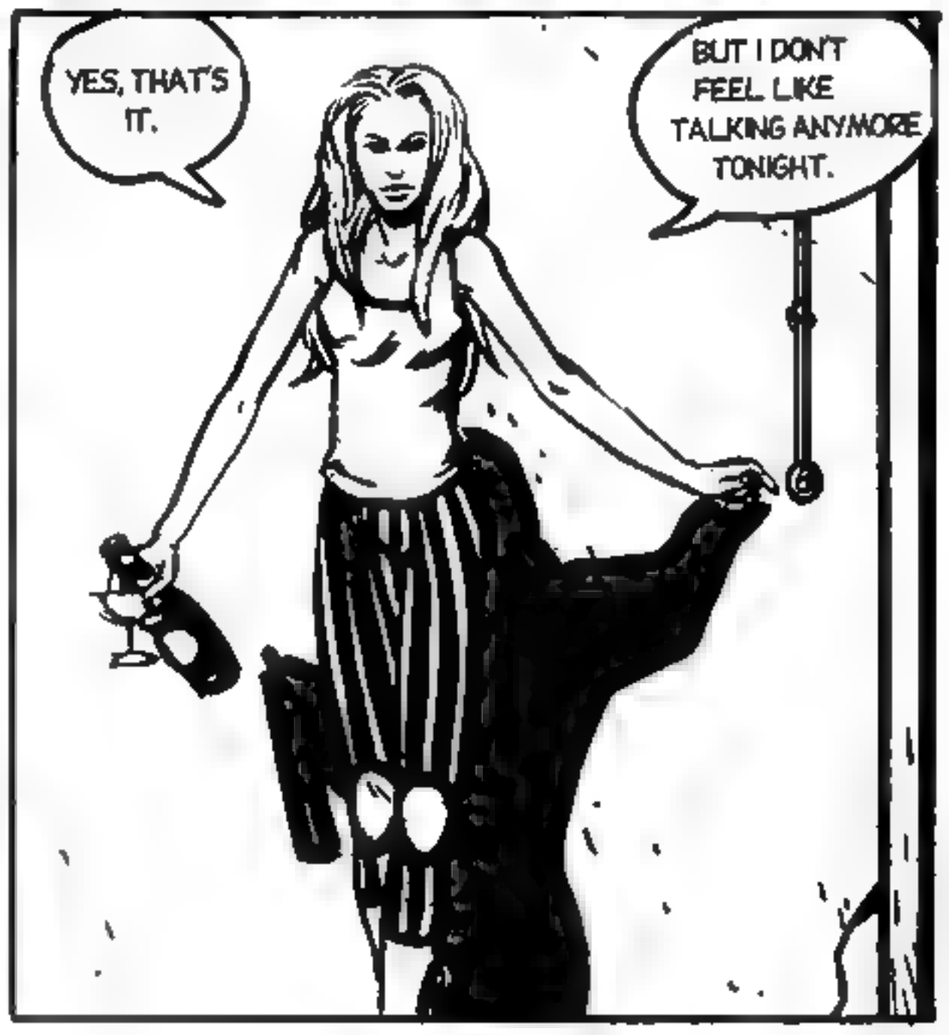
IT'S SO SPARSE.

I LIKE IT LIKE THIS.
THERE'S ROOM FOR MY IDEAS.

IT'S PERFECT.

THANK YOU.


IS THIS IT?


YES, THAT'S IT.
BUT I DON'T FEEL LIKE TALKING ANYMORE TONIGHT.

Reflections on Doctor Richardson

About six hundred and ninety days ago, when I had just begun work on my first drawn novel, *Sin Titulo*, I was in college, studying art history in the mornings, and painting well into the evenings. I studied the door jambs of Moissac, with their twisted forms of sculpted religious figures, and learned the mystical significance of the legbone of Saint Somebody-Or-Other and the etherial station of the hambone of Our Holy Whomever, etc., the whole thing. Wonderful stuff, really. I looked at painters I grew to admire; Van Eyck, Zuberan, and Caravaggio. I had a course taught by a Doctor Richardson, a scholar of first the Early Italian Renaissance, then, the Renaissance of Northern Europe. He was a careful and reserved and brilliant man, with wet, sorrowful eyes and delicate, long fingerbones. Watching him was almost more interesting than paying attention to the lectures. What Doctor Richardson looked like is unimportant; he looks nothing like the Doctor Richardson of this tale, but he is where it all begins. I may've changed some of the specifics of the man, but I tried to keep the real Richardson's sad wet eyes and his delicate fingerbones.

This story, the story of the fictional Doctor Richardson, came from a certain crystolized moment on the day of the final exam for his class. I

had already begun to loathe school, and the girl I love was sleeping in my bed way across the city, beneath a blanket and the curtain of the snow, sweating, rolling, dreaming. Two reasons enough to hurry through the thing. I turned in the take home portion– An imagined dialogue between the artists Caravaggio and Valesquez– And gave back the correct answers on the in-class portion robotically, as they teach you to do. When I left, the Doctor caught me in the hall, to tell me something. He had liked my take home essay. He must've read it during the test. I felt immediate shame, shame because I had lumped him in with all the rest of the things about state schooling I can't tolerate, and gradually, I felt wonder, at his manner, watching him speak. He was hesitant, shy, almost embarrassed. It was very attractive on an authority figure, embarrasment. It made his wing tips curl. I made a fast one about my next test being at five-thirty, and I hurried on my way.

I began to wonder about him-- wondering if there was a woman sleeping in his bed behind that snowfall. He had an equal mix of monkish and roguish characteristics. He had strange mojo. He'd travelled the world, yet was so flustered next to a young girl it was amusing. When he spoke of art he had an aristocratic manner more suited for an age better than ours.

Out on the frozen and freezing street, shuffling between fat throngs of people, my lazy mind filled with imaginings of things I thought occupied the Doctor's private, secret life. I stopped and stared and knew I had it, although I didn't know it was the skeleton of the story which would eventually become *The Ballad Of Doctor Richardson*. It burned in my noodle with such potency, it fixed me in my spot. Whatever it was, I knew I would have to create it. I realized I had invented a history for a man I hardly knew, the thing you're reading now.

While all this spun around in my head, I was looking at a huge, twisted piece of metal sticking out of the cement on the periphery of the sidewalk.

Designs for Doctor Richardson's apartment.

One tradition of the Renaissance artist was to add a ***Momento Morti*** *in the painting– Literally, a Death Reminder. Caravaggio places a skull in the lower right of the composition of "The Martyrdom of Saint Paul." For me, ravens are the momento for our plowed over years.*

I went back and looked at that twisted metal thing later. It was the remains of an old mailbox or lamppost or trashbin or some such thing some drunk must've plowed over years ago. It was all rusted and brown. On it's side was the imprint of a date: 1912. The man who placed the thing was likely dead or dying, just as his metal was crumbling and dying under the subtle onslaught of oxygen and salt and water.

I looked around and saw death and decay everywhere. The old leathered skin of the old guy at the coffee house on Union, the one who involuntarily shakes and spills his cup when he tries to sip. The broken windows and rotten floorboards of the old "Fire Proof" warehouse on South High. Mold and muck in stillpools which were once melting snow. Dead things on the highways. And my reflection in the passing car windshield, I who once played with toys and drank chocolate milk with two careful hands, I, too, was approaching my rusty plowed over years.

I thought this: There is too little time in this life. You are given roughly over at birth, you are stolen away without appeal at death, and it will come someday much too soon that they'll be lowering you in the clay under some Cypress tree. A man like this Doctor Richardson, with so much to say, so much to offer, would have only his fear to overcome, and then, sanctuary.

I wanted to tell the story of a man who did not measure his days in coffee spoons, who would not hesitate in the stairwell leading to the room of a certain girl, a girl who would unlock the door. The story of a man who would defy the dumb universe.

I sit in coffee houses a lot. I drink thick, black coffee. I watch people outside. Maybe I see a man across the avenue, behind the taxis and the bycycles. Maybe he is short and fat. Maybe he is

tall and bald with an architect's tube, and the woman he is with is short and fat with a baby. Maybe they fight, each in turn stomping off in their opposite directions. And *there* is the opposite of art, that chance event I spy. It lacks plot, but art cannot lack plot, even if the artist wants it to.

As I drink coffee I watch the snow cascade outside. It falls in some hidden pattern, like the strange trailings of coffee steam, rising. If I were drawing snowflakes, I would know their every move. They would fall as I suited, not as they suit themselves. So it is with constructing plots. But, I wondered why I shouldn't write a story which reflects this chaos over my head? A story without the traces of a plot?

The truth is, this sort of story can't be told, and if it could, it'd probably be insufferably boring. All the snowflakes falling in *The Ballad of Doctor Richardson* are snowflakes I placed there. That guy across the street may be going somewhere, and then again, he may not. That will never happen in art. The leaving man will always have a place he is going.

Go out and look at the cracks in the street. There is no logic to their formation we can see, no highways to trace across their paths, no map to read, no plot. That is how I wanted *The Ballad of Doctor Richardson* to seem, like a series of random events, real, falling snowflakes. Of course, this was an illusion I led myself into believing, since I intended for Richardson and Noel to fall in love all along, and from the first scene, where Richardson drops the exams, I knew where he would be ending up in the end. But in the name of "realism", I wanted these twelve hours in his life to seem spontaneous, chaotic, and natural the way twelve hours do, in their rumbling way.

The first drawing of Noel. "Let her be part Robert Johnson, part Edison, part 22 yr. old girl," read my notes. Her name then was simply, "The Heroine".

I begin a drawn novel with a full length hand-written manuscript, then I work out compositions in quick, abstract sketches, mainly to place positive and negative spaces on the page.

Many scenes serve to express this aspect of the story, having no direct relationship to the nominal plot, but there to add dimention and depth to a simple thing, like perfume behind a kiss, or the way you always miss some of the ornaments on your mother's tree, the blue angel or little Rose-bud.

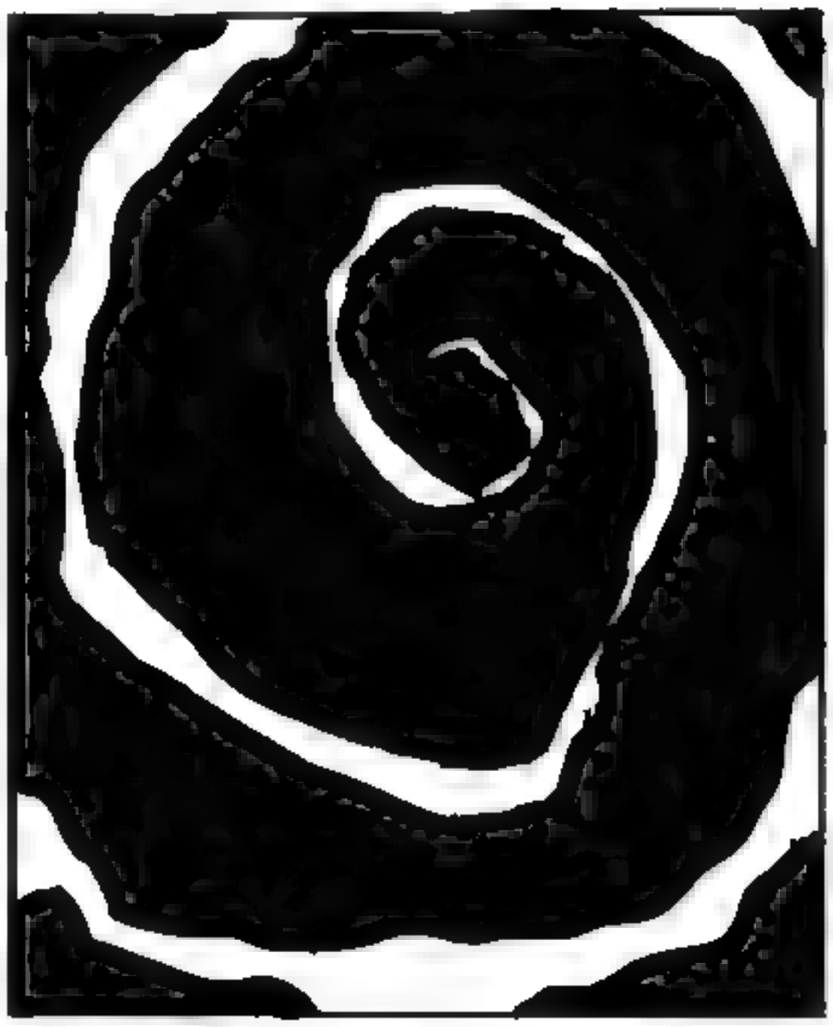
The problem is that characters have plots inside them, always and unavoidably, and even if I wanted a story about chaos, the characters wanted a story with more obvious orders.

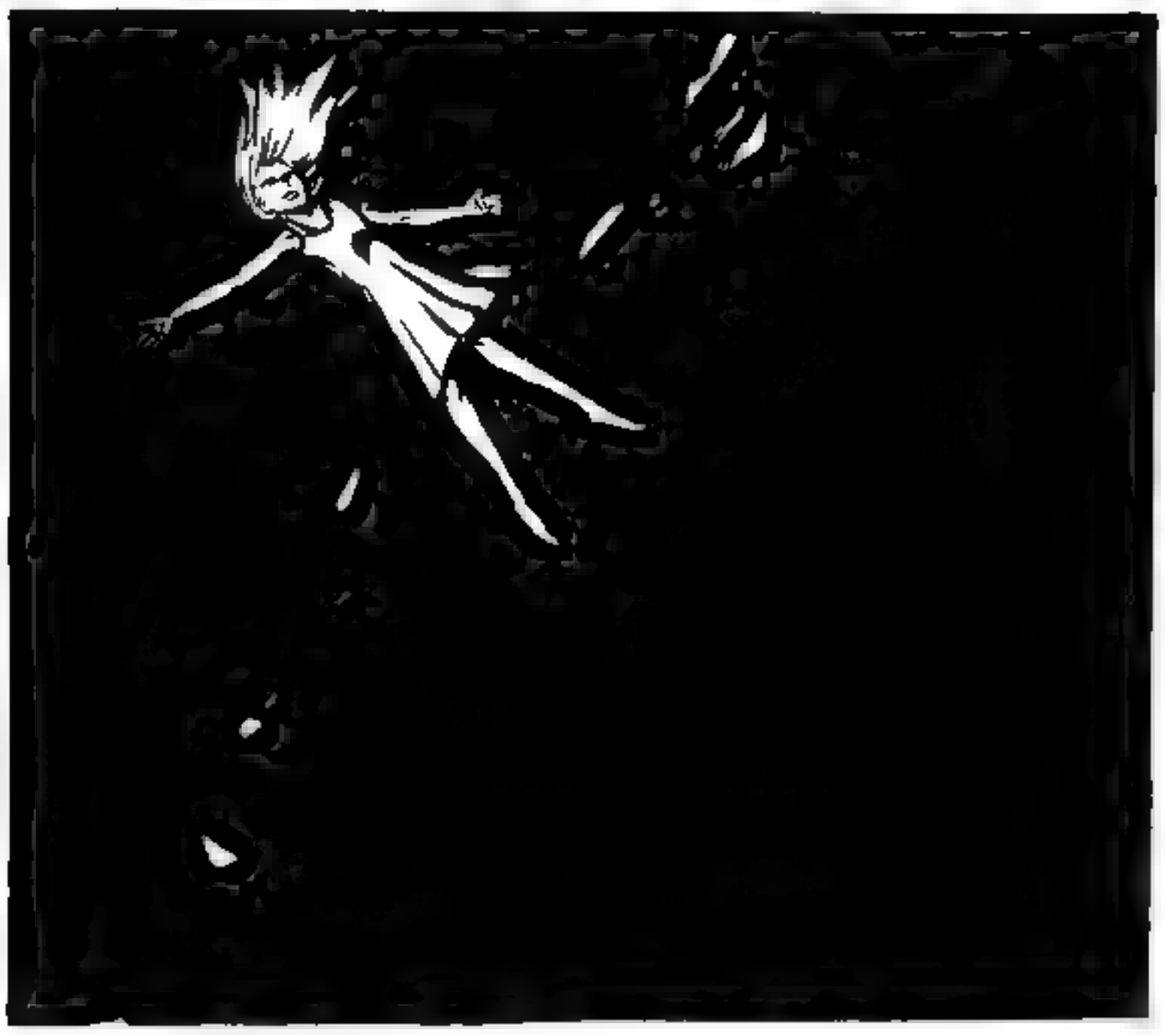
The first instigator was King Kush.

He was the primary culprit in this plot against no plot, because his presence required storytelling. I needed to get Richardson from The Vanguard to Cafe Armageddon somehow, but I couldn't do it without introducing some sort of coincidence which would likely cause the artifices of the story to poke through like an elbow in a threadbare sweater (and remind the reader he's reading a story and not living it directly). Noel wouldn't leave behind any clues on her own, not knowing Richardson was behind her, but she might've if she did know. And it seemed too obvious for the bartender to know where to find her-- That trick always works in comics, but never in real life, I find. So I was left with Kush.

Originally, Kush was just a man playing a trumpet in the subway tunnel, another aspect of the city. But then he became French and developed a personality. Then he took a liking to the Doctor and decided to do a favor for his friend Noel. His wallet acquired a photo of his girl, his bass player was bald, and he trained Benny to give him a shot of rye when he came to the bar on break. Before I knew it, there was a plot, more than randomness would ever allow.

This notion of mine, the idea of creating a story based on a theory of chaos, began losing ground to the idea of creating a sort of sprawling romance, an anti-Prufrock, a ballad almost from the very beginning. I don't mind this at all, since romantic love is one of the most important things in the real world, and surely one of the most worthwhile things to write about. I realized that this idea was in Noel and Richardson much more than it was in Kush, that Kush was among the least of my problems, and if I really wanted to avoid the structure of a plot, romantic or otherwise, I should avoid using the principal characters altogether. But then, if I were really interested in doing something like that, I'd forget about strip art and go back to my oil paints and abstract expressionism.





HI.
WHEN DID YOU GET HOME?

TWO HOURS AGO. THREE.

I HEARD THE HOLO TRAILING UPSTAIRS.

I'M SORRY IF I WOKE YOU.

YOU KNOW I DON'T MIND.

I'M TRANSCRIBING THIS PIECE. VIV RECORDED IT LIVE TONITE.

"THE BALLAD OF DOCTOR RICHARDSON".

THAT'S WHAT I CALL IT. IT'S WRITTEN FOR A FRIEND.

IT'S BEAUTIFUL.

VERITAS

VERITA

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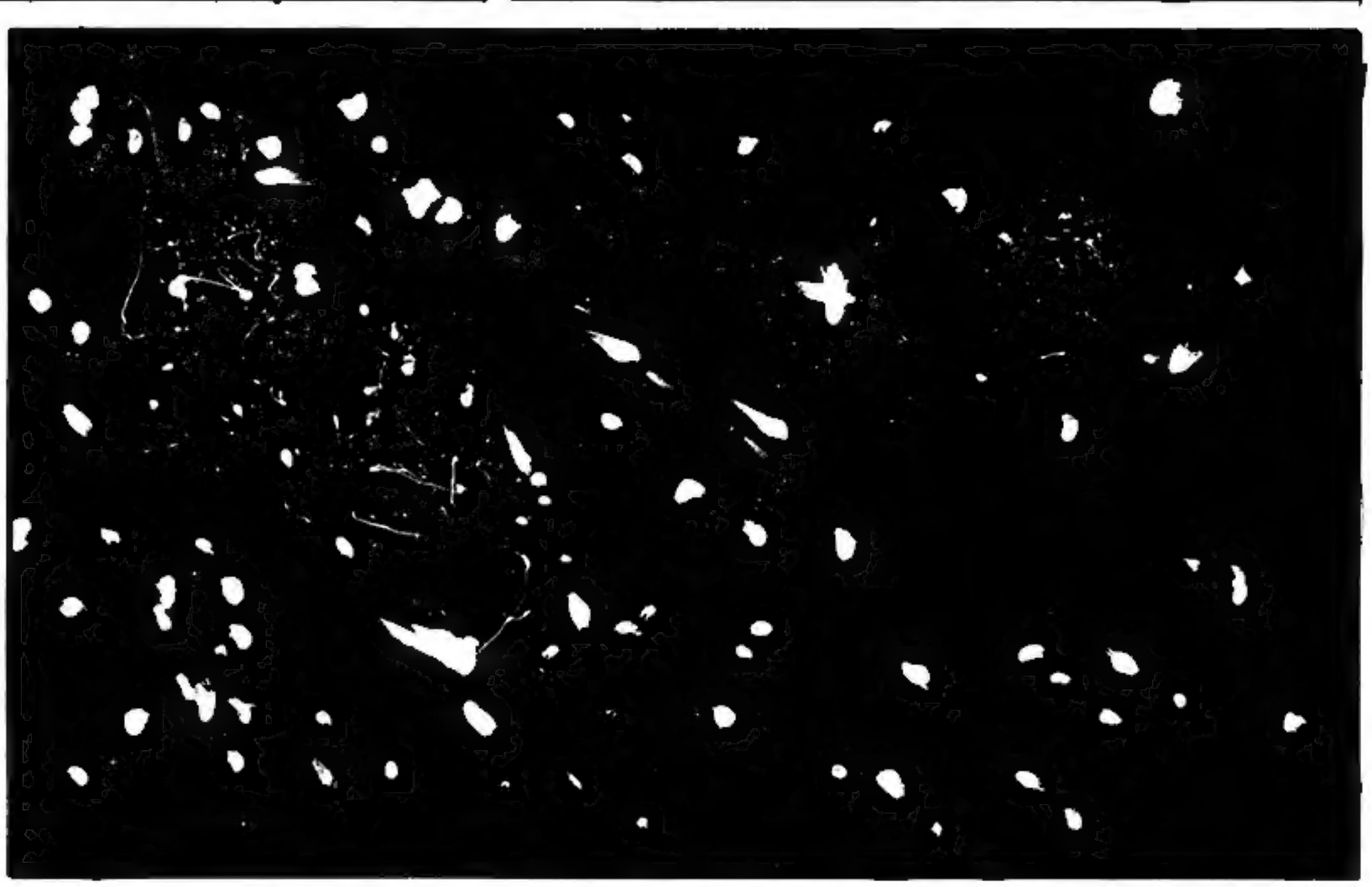

Paul Pope uses 18x24 Hotpress Bristol Boards, FW opaque acrylic inks, Morilla and Winsor & Newton brushes, Design artgum, and Gaebel Graphic Design tools.

PAUL POPE (1970-) has worked in book and magazine illustration, as an editorial cartoonist, and as a commercial artist for various industries. He has designed performance art programs, numerous posters, illustrations for sheet music, and stage sets. His cartoon creations *H.R. Watson* and *THB* appear regularly in *The Exchange*.

In comics, he has collaborated with veteran comics writer Robert Kanigher, on a revival of Kanigher's Golden Age hero, *The Bouncer*. He's also done a strip, *The Sitting Lady*, with Pat MacDonald, singer/guitarist of the rock group Timbuk-3. Pope's oil paintings, watercolors, and original boards for comic strips are in several private collections in the US and Europe, and his work has gained him a wide field of critical praise, ranging from comics pioneer Will Eisner to Mark Arm of the Grunge band Mud Honey.

He spends his time between Ohio and California's Bay Area, working on his two forthcoming strip projects: the limited series *THB* and the drawn novel *Prelude to Icarus*.

It has been nearly 2 years from the initial idea to the eventual publication of this book, with the bulk of the work occurring in Winter + Summer 1993. My goal was and is to create literate stories in the SEQuential Art medium. I have tried to throw out everything which didn't begin in my own imagination. Nearly 2 years, and now I want to communicate. If you write me, I'll reply. Pope 10/93

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